

Guest Editorial

“Systematic Reviews and Beyond.....”

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The Cochrane Collaboration endeavours to provide, disseminate and integrate evidence into clinical practice. Since its foundation in 1993 by Ian Chalmers and his colleagues, it has provided a strong platform utilizing evidence based healthcare through its publication of the Cochrane Library. A key component of the Cochrane Library is the collection of protocols and systematic reviews addressing a variety of interventions in healthcare. The Cochrane Library has contributed to the significant number of published systematic reviews which is reported to be in excess of 5,000 reviews in 2012. Systematic reviews aim to analyse contemporary research using the best available evidence. Those reviews often become the foundation for clinical practice guidelines for practitioners and consumers.

This year the Cochrane Collaboration is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The Collaboration has strived to improve the science of systematic reviews by developing and testing new methodologies. It has also been the leader in developing a gold standard for systematic reviews through the rigour of its methodological structure, the transparencies of its methods and the dissemination of its reviews online which are available to all clinicians and consumers of the healthcare system.

More recently, the Cochrane Library has moved to publish overviews of reviews. Cochrane Overviews use different methods from Cochrane Intervention reviews; they summarize existing Intervention reviews rather than original studies. The aim of publishing overviews is to summarize evidence from systematic reviews of the effects of interventions. Overviews of systematic reviews may inform policy makers about the latest evidence regarding a particular intervention.

The launch of the Cochrane Nursing Care Network (later renamed Cochrane Nursing Care Field [CNCF]) in April 2009 marked a significant milestone in the Collaboration and nursing practice. The International CNCF is coordinated from Adelaide, Australia and consists of six different groups with members from over thirty five countries across the world. Its main objective is to improve health by increasing the use of the Cochrane Library by nurses and others involved in delivering, leading or researching nursing care as well as engaging nurses and others with the Cochrane Collaboration.

Several studies (Khalil, 2009; Khalil & Leversha, 2010; Mollinari, Jaiswal, & Hollinger-Forrest 2011, Roberge, 2009) have recently identified many challenges faced by rural and remote health practitioners including nursing staff. These include the recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of staff, professional isolation, long and inflexible working hours, staff shortages, insufficient locum relief, and inadequate support for continuing education (Gruen, Weeramanthri, Knight, & Bailie 2003; Grobler et al., 2009). The CNCF has contributed significantly to rural nursing practice by providing an outlet for a number of summaries of nursing care relevant Cochrane Reviews to be published. This has resulted in increased awareness of Cochrane by nurses and others associated with nursing care; improved access and usage of Cochrane reviews; and promoting the ongoing contribution of nurses to the Cochrane

Collaboration. The *Online Journal of Rural Nursing and Health Care* highlights the importance of the work to rural health, nursing and or policy through the publication of high quality research articles including systematic reviews (O'Lynn et al., 2009; Williams, 2012).

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